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## Evangelical Visitor - December 10, 1982 Vol. 95. No. 22.

Glen A. Pierce

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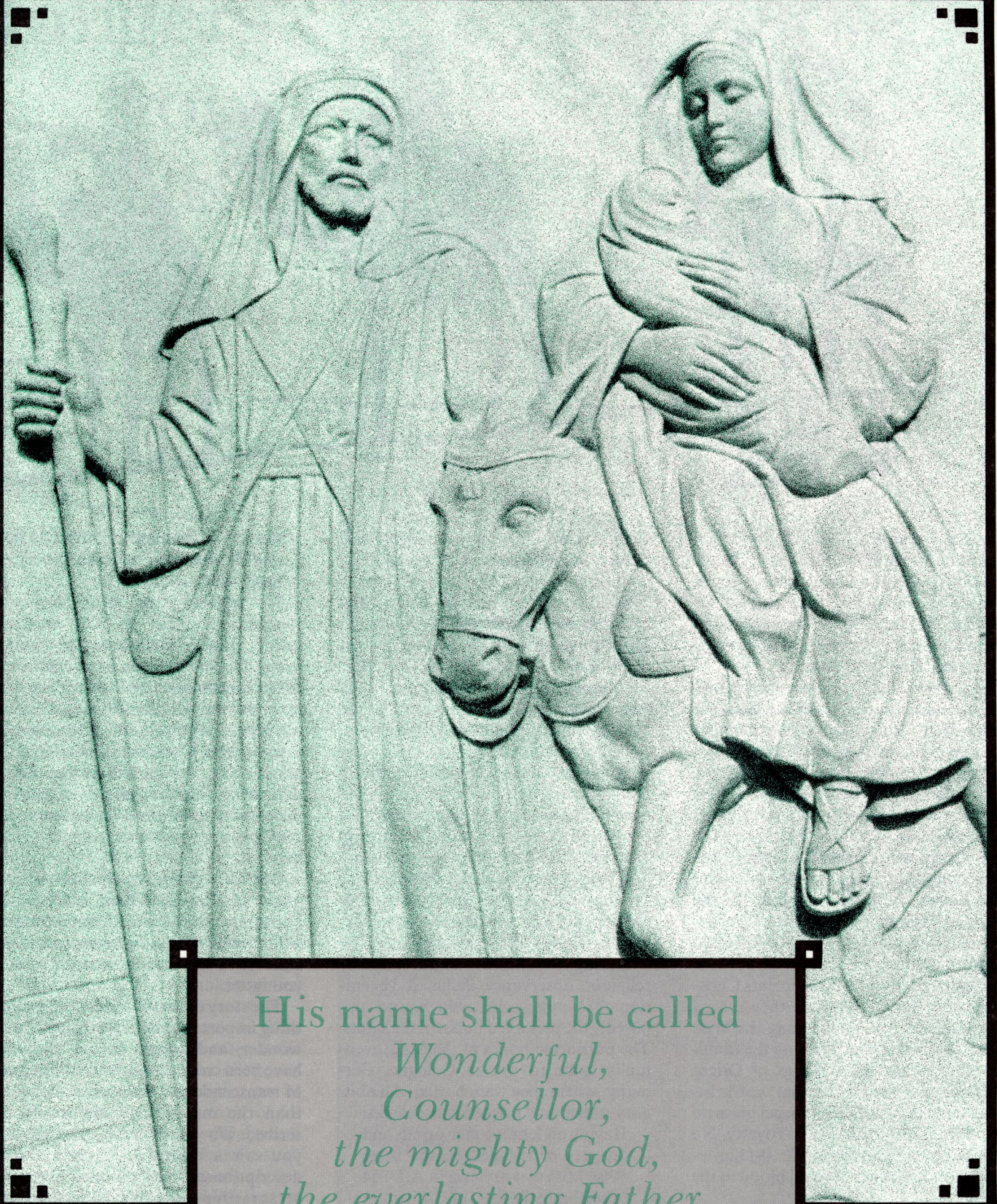
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December 10, 1982



His name shall be called  
*Wonderful,  
Counsellor,  
the mighty God,  
the everlasting Father,  
the Prince of Peace*

(Isaiah 9:6)





As a youngster, I didn't pay much attention to the shepherds in the Christmas story. Oh, it was nice to hear about a little shepherd boy who carried his lamb to the stable where the baby lay in the manger. And the thought of an angel choir was kind of interesting.

But I was far more taken by those mysterious strangers from the East, the Wise Men. Who were they? Where did they come from? And what magnificent gifts they brought! I was entranced.

Scholars tell us that Christians in the first few centuries of the church reacted much as I had as a child. The Wise Men (the Greek word is *magi*) caught Christian fancy earlier and more often than did Luke's common shepherds. In the Roman catacombs, the Wise Men appeared as part of Christian art fully two centuries before the shepherds.

One of the first embellishments Christian piety supplied to Matthew's brief account was that of elevating the Wise Men to royal status. We sing the familiar carol, "We Three Kings of Orient Are" without being aware that the Christmas story in Matthew's Gospel gives no support at all to the idea of royalty. No doubt a passage in Psalm 72:10-11 influenced the ascribing of royal blood to the

Magi: "May the kings of Sheba and Saba bring gifts; may all kings pay him homage."

Because of the gifts the Wise Men brought, their number was most often set at three. Yet in the catacombs art mentioned above, sometimes two Wise Men appear, and sometimes four. Much later, during medieval times, lists of the Magi included as many as 12 Wise Men, complete with names.

In Western Europe the most common names for the Wise Men are contained in an interesting manuscript dating from the seventh century and describing "Melchior" as "an old man with white hair and a long beard," "Gaspar" as "young and beardless and ruddy complexioned," and "Balthasar" who was "black-skinned and heavily bearded."

During the Middle Ages, popular religious observance included veneration of so-called relics, which were supposedly the preserved bones of the saints. The purported bones of the Magi eventually came to rest in Cologne, Germany, where they were buried. An obituary notice was prepared as follows:

Having undergone many trials and fatigues of the gospel, the three Wise Men met at Sewa in A.D. 54 to celebrate the feast of Christmas. Thereupon, after the celebration of Mass, they died: St. Melchior on January 1st, aged 116; St. Bal-

thasar on January 6th, aged 112; and St. Gaspar on January 11th, aged 109.\*

We can smile at these naive and superstitious ideas by believers of a former time. In fact, there was a period in my life when, fresh from courses in biblical scholarship, I turned up my nose at the Christmas stories. They seemed so obviously full of semilegendary material. Christmas and all its trappings could, I believed, seduce Christians away from the heart of the gospel—the cross of Christ and the command to take up our own crosses, and follow him.

But I've changed—mellowed, you might say. I believe there is something important the story of the strangers from the East has to give us, something akin to what I felt when I was a youngster.

The story of the Wise Men says something important about the place of awe, wonder, and delight in our lives. We have been created to need the dimension of transcendence. Life consists of more than the measurable, the easily described. Do you remember the last time you saw a beautiful sunrise? A mere description of what it looked like might go something like this: "The sky was a

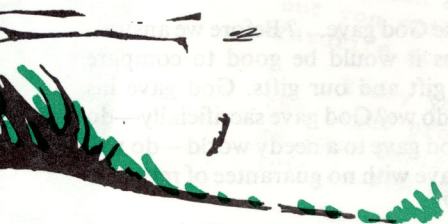
\*In Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, Doubleday, 1977.

Kenneth Gible is a writer and instructor living in Harrisburg, Pa.



# Strangers from the East

by Kenneth L. Gible



dark blue; the clouds on the horizon were colored red and pink and orange." But such a description would in no way capture the beauty, the meaning of that sunrise.

It's the same with the story of the Wise Men. True, the Gospels could have been written without stories concerning the birth of the child in Bethlehem. But what a beautiful and rich meaning these stories give to the gospel. There is always something hidden and mysterious about God's dealings with us. How appropriate it is that strange men from who-knows-where suddenly appear on the scene, telling of a wondrous star and what it meant. They find the child at last and offer him exotic, rare gifts. Can you see the contrast in your mind—costly treasures being laid at the feet of this child of peasant parents? In this we see that God chooses the humblest of vessels to offer us his own rich treasures.

Another thing the story of the Wise Men tells us is that people often resist the gifts of God. When the Magi announce that they have seen the star of the King of the Jews, the people of Jerusalem are upset. "Not now," they seem to have said. "We cannot handle such news right now. We're just barely coping with life as it is. What we don't need is someone to come along and stir things

*next page, please*

## evangelical VISITOR

December 10, 1982

Vol. 95, No. 22

### FEATURES

- 2 Strangers from the East Kenneth Gible
- 4 I have a friend who asks "Why?" Gilbert Gomez
- 5 "Dear Christena . . ." Karen Deyhle
- 6 Messenger of Grace Martin H. Schrag
- 7 "We'll remember you because of the trees you helped us plant" Bernie Bayless
- 8 Bitter to Sweet Ronah Mudenda
- 9 Life Line welcomes new superintendent
- 10 Missions Prayer Fellowship Projects
- 12 The Legend of the Flute Player Mildred Imboden
- 16 Reflections of a "retired" missionary Lewis B. Sider

### DEPARTMENTS

- 11 Church News
- 14 The Contemporary Scene
- 15 Editorial: "If you know me, you know my Father"

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## Strangers . . .

from page 2

up, even if it is the Messiah. Sorry, but we can't be bothered."

Even so do we sometimes resist God's gifts to us. We are fearful of the changes they might bring. "We're doing all right," we say. "Why risk upsetting things?"

We forget that rejection of God's gifts results in tragedy. This is another reason why the story of the Wise Men is important. For it contains a dark side as well as the brightness of a star. Herod's fear and anger produce evil fruit—a bloody determination to destroy the new king.

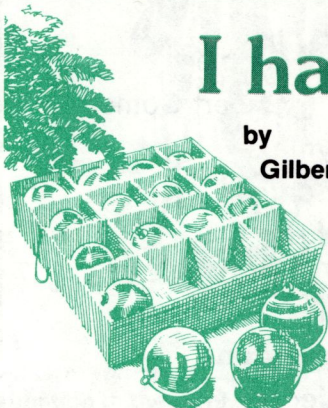
True to form, the Bible does not minimize the existence of evil in the world. And this too is part of the ongoing story of our relationship with God.

I urge you to tell the story of the Magi. Tell it because it is part of God's story, part of our story too. Tell it to your children and your grandchildren during this season of wonder. We need times of celebration—complete with songs and good food. We need stories too—not just cutesy little tales about Rudolph and his nose and all the rest. We need stories that help us understand what life is at its highest peaks and deepest depths. We need human ways of

understanding the awesome mystery of God's coming to us in love.

If someone asks you to describe what fear is or what jealousy is, or hatred, or love, you won't find a dictionary definition adequate. Inevitably, you'll end up telling a story about an event in your own or someone else's experience. And when we Christians try to describe grace or glory or divine love, we end by telling a story.

So tell the story—because it needs to be told. Sing the carols. Draw the pictures. Set up the manger scenes. And through it all, proclaim the central truth of Christmas: God with us—in love. ■



## I have a friend who asks, "Why?"

by

**Gilbert Gomez**

I have a friend who disagrees with the way that Christians celebrate Christmas. He states a number of objections and bases his nonobservance of the holiday upon these objections. While I do not advocate doing away with Christmas, I do think that my friend raises some serious questions for us. Allow me to share my friend's views on Christmas.

To begin with, my friend opposes what he considers to be a distorted emphasis given to Christmas and Christ's birth. The early church did not place such an unbalanced emphasis on the incarnation of Christ, but instead looked upon his death and resurrection as the central aspect of the Christian faith. One evidence of the centrality of the resurrection is seen in the fact that they adopted Sunday as their day of worship instead of the Jewish Sabbath. Also, in the record of the Acts of the Apostles, there are by far many more references to Christ's death and resurrection than to his incarnation. This is not to suggest that the incarnation was not important; certainly, without it there could not have been a resurrection. However, for the early disciples the fact of the resurrection was so vivid a reality that they were compelled to make this the main focus of their message. If this is any indication of what the church's emphasis ought to

be today, my friend may have a valid point.

Another objection that my friend raises has to do with the origin of the church holiday of Christmas. Indeed, the church of the first three centuries did not observe the birthday of Christ in any special way. My friend points out that the fourth century church (by then the ecclesiastical Catholic church based in Rome) chose December 25 as the date for observance of Christ's birthday to "neutralize" the pagan observance of winter solstice, which was a celebration of the sun god's return to the north. It also may have been chosen as an incentive to the pagans to join the church without giving up their customary days of festivity. At a much later date Pope Gregory I advised missionaries to keep native pagan customs associated with winter solstice but to infuse into them Christian meanings. Consequently, many elements of our present-day Christmas have their origins in paganism.

A third objection that my friend raises is the gross materialism that has become central in the celebration of Christmas. Even for the Christian, lavish spending ("But it's for my wife!") is expected. My friend challenges the church to contain unnecessary spending during this time. There are too many needs toward which our money could go. The way we spend our money is a clear message about our values. We are also teaching our children to associate happiness with receiving and possessing material things. No wonder materialism is increasing; it won't stop until we stop it!

And anyway, challenges my friend, why do we give gifts at Christmas?

Because God gave. . . ? Before we answer, perhaps it would be good to compare God's gift and our gifts. God gave his best—do we? God gave sacrificially—do we? God gave to a needy world—do we? God gave with no guarantee of return—do we?

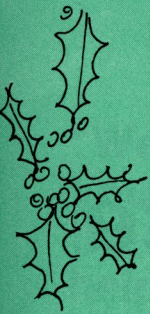
A final objection is that Christmas is, for the most part, the "world's holiday." My friend is concerned that there may be a greater number of non-Christians celebrating Christmas than there are Christians. Certainly, this ought to flash warning signals to the church. December 25—that's Christmas, for believer and unbeliever alike. And the unbeliever in many instances pretends to be a believer on that day. He becomes religious, goes to church, sings hymns and maybe even takes his dusty Bible off the shelf to read the Christmas story. But then, after Christmas. . .

Should the church, my friend asks, encourage such hypocrisy by joining in observance of the "world's holiday," giving it just enough "religion" to ease the consciences of unbelievers and lukewarm Christians? Or should the church disassociate itself from the "world's holiday"? Does the church dare raise its prophetic voice loud enough to be heard above the cheer and mirth of Christmas? What would be the greater testimony to the world's hypocrisy at Christmas: for the church to refuse to observe the "world's holiday" or for the church to try to convert Christmas into the "Christian's holiday"? These are questions that have led my friend to the position which he espouses.

*Gilbert Gomez pastors the Union Grove congregation near New Paris, Ind.*

*Evangelical Visitor*





Dear Christena,

Nagoya-shi, Japan

I was going through my Christmas list and there was your name. It must be over twenty years since I first met you. Actually, I did not really meet you then, but that is when our correspondence began. I was helping my grandmother get her Christmas cards addressed and when we came to yours, she said, "Here is someone who would really appreciate a card from a young person like you."

I lived in Canada then, and Pennsylvania seemed far away. I slipped the card in the mail and forgot about it. When you got it, I guess it brightened up your day a little and you wrote back immediately. That was the beginning of a long friendship.

When I came to Messiah College, I found I lived quite close to the old Messiah Home in Harrisburg. I began to visit you there. Of course, that address is scratched off my Christmas list and the new one in Mechanicsburg was added. It was a difficult move for you; you did not want to leave the action of the city. You had a lovely new room and beautiful grounds, but you still liked to get a ride into town so you could visit all your favorite stores and restaurants.

Every year, long before Christmas, you would carefully shop for just the right present for me. During my December visit, you would shyly give me your Christmas present, assuring me that you had found "the last one left in the whole world."

We had fun exchanging presents, but it was the visits you cherished the most. I wish I had come more often, Christena. On my last visit we talked about my mission assignment. You were so happy that your "special friend" was going overseas in the Lord's work, but you were sad I would be gone for three years. You walked me out to the car (as you always did-- it made the visit last longer) and with tears in your eyes you said maybe you would not be there when we return. With a sweet smile you added, "But I will see you in heaven."

I sent you a few letters from Japan. Then I heard that you were very ill. At your funeral someone expressed that it was good you did not have to stay in the hospital a long time, for you never liked to be slowed down a bit! You had a lot of spunk.

How did you manage to keep a pet bird in your room? Surely there must be a policy against that sort of thing at the Village. You had a way of keeping your individuality while living in an institution. One time on a group outing, while everyone else in the van was eating their vanilla ice cream, you held up the driver so you could go and get a chocolate one.

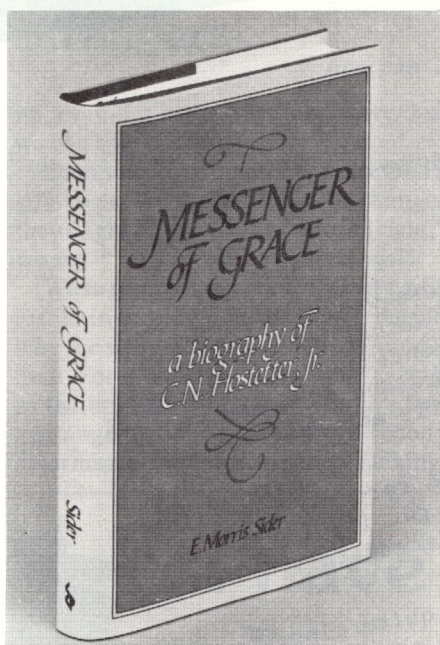
I will miss you. There are others to visit when I return to America. But it won't be the same. You were one of a kind, "the only one left in the whole world." And now you are with Jesus. A very special Merry Christmas to you this year, Christena.

Love,

Karen

*From her missions assignment in Japan, Karen Deyhle reflects on her friendship with the late Christena Lebeck, a resident of Messiah Village.*





# Messenger of Grace

Reviewed by Martin H. Schrag

E. Morris Sider. *Messenger of Grace: A Biography of C. N. Hostetter, Jr.* Nappanee, Indiana: Evangel Press, 1982. 272 pages. Paper, \$5.95; Cloth, \$7.95. (In Canada, \$7.15 and \$9.55).

I was first attracted to him by his winsome smile, the sparkle in his eyes and his ability to communicate the Gospel. Yet, I reserved judgment as I had been taught that the more prominent the outer piety, the greater the danger of inner hypocrisy. My doubts vanished, for the longer I worked with C. N. Hostetter, Jr., the more I came to see him as a person of integrity, compassion and inner piety—a disciple of Christ sanctified in heart.

Given such a background, I found the reading of the biography of Hostetter, written by Dr. E. Morris Sider, a great experience. Those of you who did not know this man will also be enriched and will profit greatly from learning how God raised up a true leader.

Dr. Sider, history and literature teacher at Messiah College, had at his disposal excellent sources and he used them well. By way of example, he had the C. N. Hostetter papers, including the private diaries of Hostetter. In addition, the parents of Professor Sider were Messiah Bible School classmates and long-time friends of the Hostetters. What a mine of insight and personal experiences! But for the true historian such sources were not enough; Dr. Sider seemingly combed every hair of knowledge including the interviewing of no less than ninety-six individuals.

The result, however, is not a dull scholarly work, for the author has mastered the craft of biography writing, as many

of us noted in his earlier work, *Nine Portraits: Brethren in Christ Biographical Sketches*. His "just right" use of direct quotes, his incorporating of human interest and humorous incidents and his ability to weave together the text to maximize interest has resulted in a book that is a pleasure and joy to read. A real plus in the book are the twelve pages of pictures.

In this book we see Hostetter at work and at play, experiencing the joys and pains of life, preaching to large numbers and living in the privacy of his home, moderating meetings and counseling co-workers, firmly committed to his convictions and yet open to new insights and living a life of holiness and peace. His habit and hobbies bring home to us his humanity; his zeal and dedication clearly indicate his closeness to the Lord.

Christian Neff Hostetter (1899-1980) was indeed a "messenger of grace." Given the strong religious environment manifested in family (Lancaster County), congregation and denomination and his own inherent capacities, Hostetter early emerged as a person of great potential. He was converted at the age of fourteen, sanctified at seventeen, elected to the ministry at twenty-one (1920), graduated from Messiah Bible School in 1922 and married in the same year. As a Bible School student he began his evangelistic work. Sensing the call of God which was affirmed by his effective ministry, he continued on, conducting 47 campaigns in the 1923-1934 years. His work as the pastor of the Refton Church (Lancaster County) likewise indicated his talents, with the end result that Hostetter became widely known and respected in the Brethren in Christ Church. By 1924 he was secretary of the important Home Mission Board.

It was this visibility, plus other factors detailed by Dr. Sider, which resulted in Hostetter becoming president of Messiah College in 1934. An able administrator, a gifted financier and a committed educator, Hostetter not only lifted the school out of the throes of the depression (financial debt and low morale) but in the years ahead launched programs that greatly advanced the physical and academic development of the college. Above all he was concerned that at Messiah College, Christ would be preeminent. Dr. Sider points out that Hostetter's personal relations with the students did much to secure that objective.

Space does not permit the chronicling here of Hostetter's work as a denominational churchman, his serving as chairman of the Mennonite Central Committee, his chairing of the World Relief Commission of the National Association of Evangelicals, his life with his family and his return to the pastorate. Dr. Sider capably develops each one of these areas and in the process indicates Hostetter's leadership and influence extended far beyond his denomination.

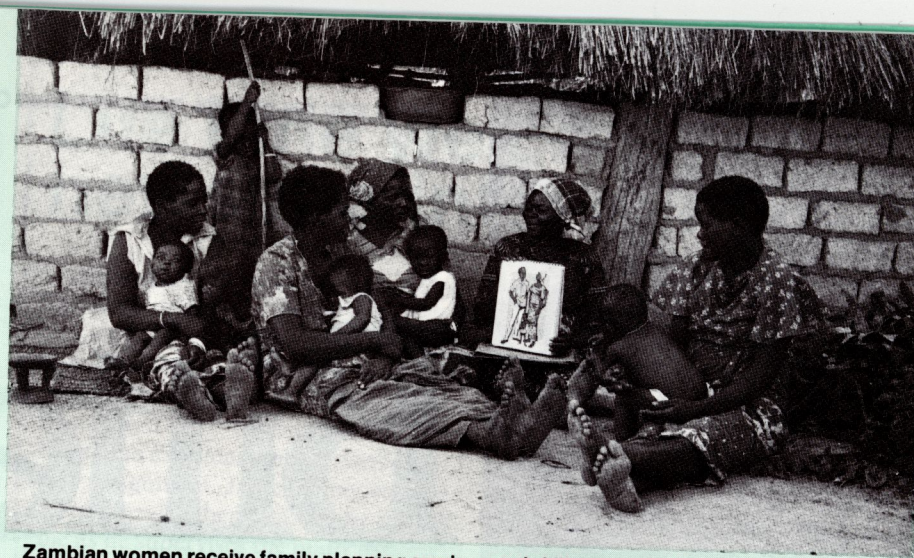
Having highlighted Hostetter's accomplishments, Dr. Sider also touches on his limitations. Hostetter learned in time, as have many churchmen, that not all the hours can be given to the church; the family also needs prime time. Further, he was such an able administrator that he was inclined to "take over" a committee or care for every college detail. It is also clear that he worked too many hours.

Dr. Robert Kreider of Bethel College in Kansas has aptly stated that "Morris Sider, with skillful brush strokes of light and shadow, gives us one of the best biographies written of one of our leaders." I say amen. ■

Dr. Martin Schrag is a member of the Messiah College faculty, Grantham, Pa.



## **"We'll remember you because of the trees you helped us plant"**



**Zambian women receive family planning services and skills as part of Nelda Thelin's work with the Sikalongo Development Program. (MCC photo by Nelda Thelin)**

Local people know him as "the old man with a beard who visits us and speaks our language." And they want him to stay.

The "old man" is 47-year-old Bob Thelin and the language is Tonga, the predominant tongue in Zambia's Southern Province. Thelin and his wife Nelda, of La Junta, Colo., came to the area in June 1980 to help establish the Sikalongo Community Development Program, a cooperative project of the Brethren in Christ Church, United Church Board for World Ministries and Mennonite Central Committee. With less than a year remaining in their term, the Thelins will soon have to decide whether they will return for a second three years.

Comments MCC Africa co-secretary Nancy Heisey Longacre, who along with the people of Sikalongo hopes they will stay, "The Thelins' way of living with the Zambian people as they attempt to help carry out the work of the church seems to me like a practical exercise in matters we often talk about more than act out."

The work of the church at Sikalongo includes Bible teaching, family planning services and agricultural extension. Specific projects aim at helping farmers reduce dependence on expensive imported fertilizers through crop rotation, and building simple poultry pens. Says Bob Thelin, who has nearly 20 years experience in rural development in Africa, "I have always felt that agriculture was a tool to be used by the church in reaching out to people in need, of showing people that God loves them and cares about them."

The government of Zambia recently nominated Thelin to receive the title "Honorary Forest Ranger" because of his work with tree planting. In coopera-

tion with government forestry officials, the Sikalongo development program has distributed nearly 500 orange and tangerine seedlings to 33 farmers. In addition, six farmers have planted 50 eucalyptus trees each. One told him, "Mr. Thelin, we will always remember you because of the trees which you have helped us to plant."

The tree-planting effort has not been without problems. An unseasonably dry spell after a citrus-tree planting last December withered most of the new seedlings. One farmer lost all 50 of his eucalyptus trees due to termite infestation.

Thelin has also had problems convincing local people of the need to plant and preserve non-fruit trees. Uncontrolled use of trees for firewood and construction threatens to deplete the area's supplies. Acknowledges Thelin, "I think if we are realistic about it, we must realize this is an area in which local people don't have a felt need. But I think if we can get a handful of farmers to catch the vision, if they realize there is a crisis coming, then [our efforts] are worthwhile."

Local women have needed no encouragement to improve homemaking skills in clubs started with the help of Nelda Thelin. Groups of five to 18 women meet regularly at different locations to learn sewing, crocheting and other skills. Some have also expressed interest in learning more about farming.

Says Nelda Thelin, "We have no 'plan' for what we want to do for these clubs. Our goal is to remain sensitive to ways in which we can provide encouragement and educational assistance for what the women themselves want to do, and at the same time demonstrate Christ's love and concern for all of life."

Nelda Thelin also works with family

planning programs at Sikalongo and two other centers, helping provide services to 60 to 70 women. In an effort to offer a more wholistic approach, she attempts to give women opportunity to discuss and work at solutions to social and economic problems along with making available regular family planning services.

The wholistic approach of the Thelins includes a concern to nurture and be a part of the spiritual life of the community. The Thelins worship with village congregations Sunday mornings, and participate in a Bible study fellowship Sunday evenings.

Notes Bob Thelin, "Efforts at bringing renewal in the life of the church through our Sunday evening Bible study fellowship are encouraging, as we struggle with local problems such as our attitudes and the policies of the church concerning polygamy and divorce."

He has also led a 10-week course with a group of Christians on the life of Christ, and during a series of revival meetings at a local church gave 12 messages on the theme, "Jesus has broken down the walls which have separated us."

The Thelins say that when their present term ends in June 1983, "We will not be able to point to many concrete, tangible results of our being here." But they add that those results are not necessarily the most important ones. Says Bob Thelin, "We need to evaluate the mission of the church less in terms of brick and mortar, vehicles and other things, and more in terms of caring, compassionate relationships with people. Our African brothers and sisters . . . can teach us a great deal in this area." —

*Bernie J. Bayless, MCC News Service*





Ronah with her parents, now committed Christians.

# Bitter to S

*The past three days of rain have cooled the usually burning heat of Livingstone, Zambia. I am sitting in a classroom at St. Mary's Secondary School presiding over an exam. Thoughts are flowing. . . .*

From the beginning life was difficult. Just when I was old enough to know what was going on around me, my mother became sick, possessed with demons. Instead of helping her, people encouraged her to go to witch doctors who claimed to know how to deal with demons. Witch doctors, working under the influence of the devil, could do nothing apart from trying to appease the demons. She bought white enamel cups, plates, spoons, white shoes, dress and headdress to please the evil spirits. Much money was lost to the witch doctors who demanded high payment from their customers.

My father had a hard time bringing up his four daughters who looked so unhappy without their mother. She could talk to us only when the demons allowed her. I cannot explain how it felt to have a mother controlled by demons. Consequently, I developed into a bitter girl who thought the world was very cruel. I thought God was not very powerful, but just helped people live good moral lives.

Being rather religious, my father sent me to Macha Girls Primary School after finishing in our village school. Later I was enrolled in a Catholic mission secondary school. During this time I

stopped reading the Bible except to memorize Matthew, Mark and Luke well enough to get a distinction in my final examination.

Then I was accepted into the University of Zambia in Lusaka in October 1977. I "knew" there was no Brethren in Christ church there. After several months I received news that a fourth year man named Adam was looking for me. Being a first year girl, I did not want to have anything to do with fourth year men, so I ran away every time I saw him. One day I was not quick enough and he had the chance to tell me about the Sterns. He took me to their house. They visited me at school, invited me to church and my "knowledge" that there was no Brethren in Christ church in Lusaka was proven wrong.

What a heavy duty it was trying to change this gloomy young lady into a happy one! For the change to take place, something new had to be planted in my heart to take the place of my old self. I was attacked from all angles: by the church through Sunday services, youth groups, and Bible studies, and at school by a good Christian roommate, Ugandan Beatrice Odonga. (At first this seemed more of a burden than a blessing.) Beatrice encouraged me, prayed for me and helped me in my spiritual and material problems. Later, I introduced her to the Sterns and we were both accepted as their children.

I came to know the Lord personally and learned that he answers when we pray in spirit and in truth. I thought of my family in the village with my demon-possessed mother. I was very sure that the Lord was the only one who could cure her. I went home and with fear, told mother that we should pray so that the

demons in her would leave. She simply looked at me as if I was out of my mind.

When I was later introduced to Yotham Sikwangala of Sikalongo Bible Institute, I told him about my family problem. He suggested that more people be told to help in praying. Miss Fannie Longenecker soon started coming to our village with Yotham to pray for Mum.

Trying times followed. After praying, they would leave Mum very sick in bed so that she feared every time she heard them coming. One time she told me, "My daughter, you have invited death for me." I felt that my mother thought I had no love for her nor cared even if she died. My sister advised me, "You must write a letter to those people to stop coming and you also must stop praying for her. Don't you feel sad when she gets sick? This must stop now." I never wrote that letter nor did I stop praying. I was hurt when people, especially relatives, told me I was going to be responsible for my mother's death. I simply put my trust in the Lord.

The Lord was merciful and answered our prayers. After a year and a half of praying and, by that time, being visited by Bishop Silungwe and Overseer Mwaalu, my mother started giving away the things that had belonged to the demons. Up to now she believed demons were her protectors and that if they left her, she would die. One day she told me, "When they come next time, I am going to give them everything." I asked, "Don't you fear anymore?" Her answer was a surprise, as if she was not really the one talking to me, "I still fear to die, but I have seen that the demons are not good to me. They stop me from eating many things and all the time I am sick. I

*Ronah Mudenda, a 1981 graduate of the University of Zambia, is the only born again teacher in her school. She leads a young teens Bible study group and considers herself a missionary in the city of Livingstone.*



# weet

by Ronah Mudenda

have decided to do away with them and if I die, I will die in Christ and then be happy forever." I was encouraged to pray even more that Christ would become King instead of the demons. Sure enough, my mother did exactly what she said and that day she did *not* get sick.

Things started happening. My father renewed his faith in the Lord and my mother accepted the Lord as her personal Savior. She began eating foods which had been taboo for twenty years. The family was different now. We had a mother who cared for us. Instead of evil spirits, my home was full of the Holy Spirit.

I praise the Lord for the work he is doing through the Brethren in Christ Church in Lusaka, reaching and building up young people who in turn go out to tell others about Christ. I would like to say to all the churches in the cities, "Be interested in the young people you see around whose parents are far away. They need your parental care." Young people are flocking to cities, thinking an answer to their problems is found there. The church must be reaching them, helping to provide answers to their questions.

The Lusaka church helped me find myself in Christ. I entered the city afraid my life would be ruined and came out with confidence and courage to face the wider world. The Lord in turn used me to bring my family problem to the attention of others who could help.

I am only one of the many young people in different colleges in Lusaka who came to know the Lord through the concern of our church there. My prayer is that the Lord will use me to help young people in Livingstone, especially those in the schools and colleges. ■

## Life Line welcomes new superintendent

James D. Bailey with his wife Lillian has been appointed as Superintendent of Life Line Mission in San Francisco, CA. The Baileys' fourteen years with New Tribes Mission and later four years of pastoral work in Tulare, California, have been excellent preparation for their new assignment. James' experience as a mental health therapist will be invaluable as he supervises the many aspects of this ministry to men and women in crisis.

The Baileys follow Dennis Lehman who with his wife Carolyn carried the administrative and pastoral responsibilities at Life Line Mission on an interim basis. The Lehmans had served as Directors of the Family Center for two and one-half years prior to that. They have now completed their service assignment at Life Line Mission and have returned to their home in Carlisle, Pa.

James and Lillian will be working together in both the administrative and pastoral responsibilities of their assignment. The Life Line Chapel congregation which worships at 422 Guerrero Street welcomes Rev. Bailey as their new pastor. As Superintendent, James will be leading the team of mission workers in the development and coordination of the varied programs of Life Line Mission. He and Lillian have already begun a weekly program for the personal and spiritual development of the young people who come to the Life Line for a period of voluntary service.

James and Lillian are the parents of four children. Their son, James, Jr., is living with his parents in San Francisco while attending law school in the city. The Baileys have been members of the Tulare Brethren in Christ Church where James was on the leadership team. James' childhood home was in Tulare where his family were members of the Baptist Church. Lillian lived her early childhood years in Manitoba where she was nurtured in the Mennonite Church. They express a deep sense of belonging with the Brethren in Christ and are expecting to strengthen their personal ties with congregations and individuals within the denomination. Likewise Jim and Lillian are actively reaching out in the evangelical community in the San Francisco area.

Life Line Mission conducts a multi-



James & Lillian Bailey

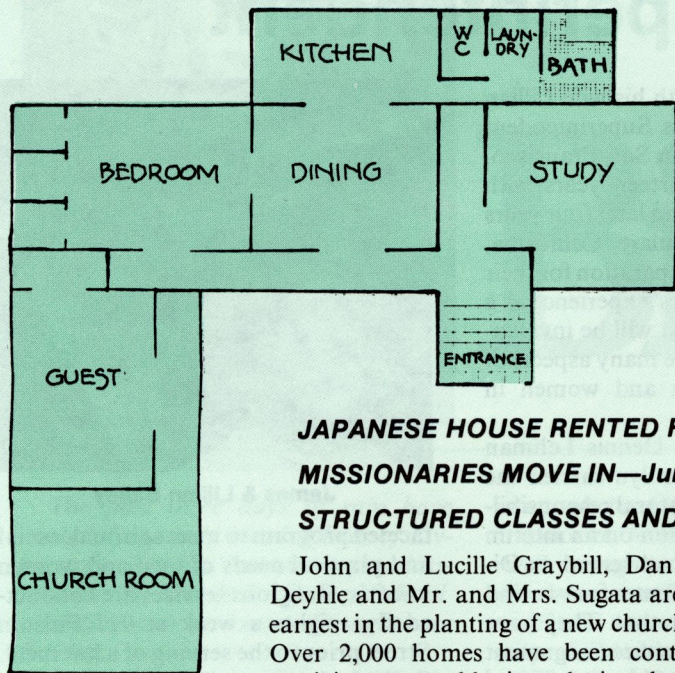
faceted program to meet spiritual, social and physical needs of men and women in crisis. Religious services are conducted five nights a week at 917 Folsom Street prior to the serving of a hot meal. Some beds are available for men on a nightly basis. A hotel offers clean, protected and low-cost rooms for men. Counseling is available for men and women seeking other options than what are found in street living. Some men who desire to make significant life changes enter a program of counseling, work and Christian training as members of the mission staff. A Thrift Store operated at 422 Guerrero Street provides both a community service and some financial support for the mission.

Financial support for the mission comes primarily from contributions of interested individuals and churches. Donations of food by local merchants make it possible to continue the daily feeding program at minimum cost. The young men and women who give a period of voluntary service in the program contribute significantly either by earning financial support or by performing staff responsibilities.

The Baileys welcome and request the support of the Life Line Mission family—those individuals who believe in and contribute to the ministry. They welcome visitors to see the various programs of the mission. Intercessory prayer by many persons is urgently needed for the work of the Lord to go forward in the hearts of the men and women who seek help at the Life Line. Regular financial contributions from every interested individual are essential to meet the monthly operating expenses of this institutional ministry. ■



# Missions Prayer Fellowship PROJECTS



**JAPANESE HOUSE RENTED FOR NEW CHURCH PLANTING—City of Nagoya, Japan**

**MISSIONARIES MOVE IN—June 28, 1982**

**STRUCTURED CLASSES AND WORSHIP SERVICES BEGIN—October 1**

John and Lucille Graybill, Dan and Karen Deyhle and Mr. and Mrs. Sugata are working in earnest in the planting of a new church in Nagoya. Over 2,000 homes have been contacted—each receiving a pamphlet introducing the church program and a gospel tract. John Graybill writes, "We are doing our best to get advertisements in our local newspapers and, in every way possible, let the

community know why we have come and what we hope God will do in this community."

To date \$6,599.33 has been received toward the \$30,000 goal (a two-year project).

As you see and feel what God is doing in this needy land, we trust you will *give joyfully* and *pray much*. God will do the rest.

—Nancy Schildt

## Muchas Gracias!



*These are the words of thanks from Gordon and Susie Gilmore, with Benji and Charity, living in Montalban, Caracas, Venezuela.*

It gives a sense of well-being to have a home comfortably and adequately furnished, especially when living in a strange, new country.

The Gilmores and the Missions Prayer Fellowship Committee thank the children's groups, families and churches who so generously have supported the 1982 Children's Missions Project, helping furnish the Gilmores' new home in Caracas. The goal of \$5,800.00 has, to date, gone over the top to \$6,828.00.

—Carolyn Mann



**The 1983 Children's Missions Project—a Ford Escort wagon for Montreal Lake Children's Home.**

Your children can help purchase a fuel-efficient Ford Escort station wagon for use at Montreal Lake Children's Home.

Occasionally several children need to see the doctor or dentist. Other times one or two persons make business trips to Prince Albert (75 miles) or Saskatoon (175 miles). Using a small wagon rather than the Children's Home van will be far more economical.

Plan now to incorporate the Children's Missions Project into your 1983 children's programming. The goal for January-December 1983 is \$5,000.

**Send contributions for both projects to:**

### CANADA

Mrs. Mary Sider  
R. R. #1  
Wellandport, Ontario L0R 2J0

### USA

Mrs. Frances Harmon  
314 East 11th Street  
Upland, CA 91786

### Children's Project Coordinator

Mrs. Carolyn Mann  
723 Sinclair Road  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055



# CHURCH NEWS

## NCC Board Accepts Resignation of School President

The Board of Trustees of Niagara Christian College has announced that it has accepted with regret the resignation of Dr. Walter Winger as president, effective June 30, 1983.

In making the announcement, the board expressed its deep appreciation for Dr. Winger's service to the school. Under his leadership, significant plans for the school have been developed.

The board is accepting inquiries for the position of president of the high school, located in Fort Erie, Ontario. Such inquiries will be treated in a confidential manner, and should be addressed to the secretary of the trustee board, Doris Cober, R.R. 2, Port Colborne, Ontario, Canada L3K 5V4.

## Allegheny Conference

A drama, "The Wonder of it All," was recently presented to the **Montgomery** congregation by the **Pleasant Valley** congregation. • The men of the **Mt. Rock** congregation put a new roof on the parsonage.

Dinner was served to the senior citizens of the **New Guilford** congregation on Sunday, Oct. 31. Prior to the meal, Randy Ritchey and Quinetta Wingert shared about their summer with Teen Missions in Mexico.

**Dr. and Mrs. James DoBoe**, pastoral couple of the Bethel congregation (Atlantic Conference) were the speakers for a Family Life Seminar held by the **Redland Valley** congregation on Nov. 12-13. • The **Shermans Valley** congregation reports a musical concert was presented to them by the Hetrick Family.

## Atlantic Conference

The **Conoy** congregation reports a teacher's appreciation dinner was held in the Fellowship Hall on Sunday, Nov. 7. • Sunday, Nov. 21 was designated as Tithe Potential Sunday by the **Elizabethtown Church**. The congregation was encouraged to give 10% of their earnings. **David McBeth**, Director of Stewardship, was the speaker.

The **Harrisburg** congregation reports a missions weekend on Oct. 9-10. Guest speakers were Eugene Madeira and Anna Engle, sponsored by the Missions Prayer Fellowship. • Ten persons were baptized and received into the church fellowship on Sunday, Oct. 24, by the **Pequea** congregation.

## Canadian Conference

Ten children from the **Bertie** congregation participated in a ten-mile walkathon. The children, ages 6-11, raised \$1,480.37 for the Children's Mission Project. Eight persons were baptized recently, including two former Laotian Buddhists. • A thank-you dinner was given for all ministry leaders of the **Massey Place** congregation on Thursday, Nov. 18.

The Board of Christian Education of the **Rosebank** congregation sponsored a seminar on Saturday, Nov. 13. The topic was "Interpersonal Relationships in the Congregation." • A mini-Marriage Enrichment Seminar was held by the **Sherkston** congregation on Saturday, Oct. 31. Resource persons were Bill and Mary Dick, members of the Rockway Mennonite Church, Kitchener.

## Central Conference

**Rev. and Mrs. Bedsaul Agee** were honored on their 25th wedding anniversary on Nov. 1, by the Bethel (Merrill) congregation. An engraved silver tray was presented to the couple.

A special Thanksgiving service was held on Sunday evening, Nov. 14, by the **Amherst** congregation. The congregation was encouraged to bring objects that represented their praise. Keith Tyson, a student at Ashland Seminary, was the guest speaker. • **Dr. Arthur Climenhaga** brought the morning message to the **Ashland** congregation on Sunday, Nov. 14. The church gave a farewell dinner for Dr. and Mrs. Climenhaga prior to their moving to California.

Homecoming was observed by the **Bethel (Merrill)** congregation on October 2-3. A new addition to the pastor's study, built in honor of former Bishop Henry Schneider, was dedicated. Speakers for the weekend were **Bishop David Climenhaga** and **Rev. Carl Ulery**.

The **DeRossett** congregation reports eight families participated in the Guess Who's Coming to Dinner program recently. • An appreciation breakfast was held by the **Pleasant Hill** congregation for all Sunday school teachers and Board of Christian Education members.

## Midwest Conference

The **Mountain View** congregation announces evangelistic services on Dec. 5-12. The evangelist will be **Dr. Henry A. Ginder**.

## Pacific Conference

A church family dinner was held by the **Alta Loma** congregation on Sunday, Nov. 21, prior to the evening service. It was also a time of dedication of food boxes prepared for needy families in the community.

On Sunday, Nov. 21, the **Labish** congregation held a day of thanks and dedication of their newly remodeled facilities. A meal was held also. • The Chancel Choir of the **Upland** congregation presented the cantata, "Exaltation," on Sunday evening, Oct. 31.

## For The Record

### Births

**Bare:** Caleb Chester, Oct. 11; Terry and Debbie Bare, Mountain View congregation, Co.

**Engle:** Samuel Jacob, Sept. 26; Dr. Eugene and Ann (Bomgardner) Engle, Speedwell Heights, Pa.

**Frizen:** Jordan Alan, Oct. 28; Jim and Joyce Frizen, Grantham congregation, Pa.

**Henry:** James Armstrong, Oct. 27; Dr. Pat and Helen Henry, Waynesboro congregation, Pa.

**Knepper:** Joel Adam, Oct. 25; Darrel and Peggy (Stoner) Knepper, New Guilford congregation, Pa.

**Landis:** Neil Adam, Oct. 27; Greg and Terri Landis, Pequea congregation, Pa.

**Melhorn:** Jerrold Mark, Oct. 6; Jim and Mary Jane Melhorn, Redland Valley congregation, Pa.

**Mowery:** Jesse Daniel, Oct. 21; Tim and Pauline Mowery, Lancaster congregation, Pa.

**Sider:** Jane Ashley, Sept. 24; Duane and Nancy Sider, Sherkston congregation, Ont.

## Weddings

**Bert-Strite:** Mary E., daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Strite and Jerod Ray, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Bert, in the Air Hill Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Roger Witter officiating.

**Caufman-Eddy:** Deborah, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Merwyn Eddy, Needmore, Pa., and LeRoy, son of Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur Cauffman, Fayetteville, Pa., Sept. 12, in the Pleasant Ridge Church of the Brethren.

**Curtis-Switzer:** Edna Switzer and Wayne Curtis, Oct. 14, in the pastor's study of the Upland Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Robert Hempy officiating.

**Henschel-Bert:** Joanna Ruth, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Bert and Douglas Earl, son of George and Doris Henschel, in the South Mt. Chapel with Rev. Roger Witter officiating.

**Hess-Conrady:** Lynda Kay, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J-Lynn Conrady, Ashland, Oh., and Rodney Lee, son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hess, Palm Harbor, Fl., Oct. 23, in the Grantham Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Glenn Dalton officiating.

**Lodge-Braman:** Lois Ann Braman, Bedford, Pa., and Harvey William Lodge Jr., Oct. 23, in the St. Thomas Catholic Church, Bedford, with Rev. Earl J. Lehman and the Catholic Father officiating.

**Seville-Swope:** Connie Jean Swope, Wells Tannery, Pa., and Michael Lee Seville, McConnellsburg, Pa., Oct. 25, in the parsonage of the **Shermans Valley Brethren in Christ Church** with Rev. Earl J. Lehman officiating.

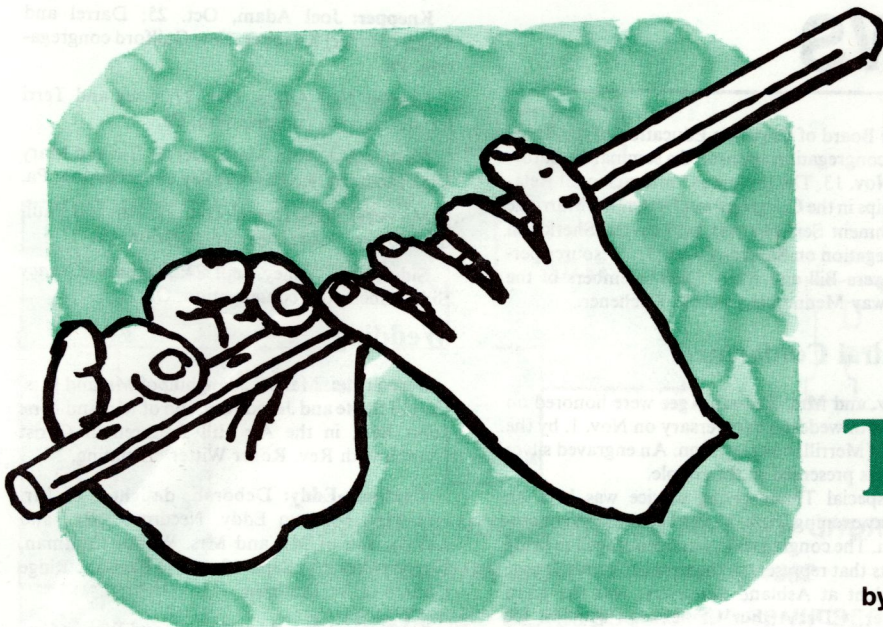
**Zook-Bentley:** Robin, daughter of Rev. Carey E. Bentley, and Lester, son of Dr. and Mrs. Donald R. Zook, both of Grantham, Pa., Nov. 20, in the Grantham Brethren in Christ Church with Dr. Robert Ives and the bride's father officiating.

## Obituaries

**Bambling:** Mrs. Grace M. Bambling, Langondale, Pa., born Sept. 3, 1891, died Oct. 12, 1982 in the Donahue Manor Rest Home, Bedford, Pa. She was preceded in death by her husband. She is survived by a daughter, Izella; and a son, Bruce. Rev. Earl J. Lehman conducted the funeral service in the **Shermans Valley Brethren in Christ Church**. Interment was in the Pleasant Ridge Nazarene Cemetery.

**Beck:** Mrs. Brenda Jean Beck, Everett, Pa., born Oct. 16, 1947, died Oct. 16, 1982 in the Bedford Co. Memorial Hospital. She was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Naopline. She was married to William E. Beck who survives. Also surviving are a son, Jerry L.; and a daughter, Laura C. Rev. Earl J. Lehman and Rev. Carl Hill conducted the funeral service. Interment was in the Everett Cemetery.





# The Legend of the

by Mildred Imboden

*(The stage is dark. Out of the darkness can be heard the distant strains of a flute. Gradually light illumines the stage, though at its brightest it is still a twilight. As the light increases, the volume of the flute increases until the origin of the music is discovered. The Flute Player is leaning against the backdrop in a somewhat melancholy mood—playing from his heart. He continues playing while Narrator talks.)*

**Narrator:** Few have heard the legend of the Flute Player, but the family of flute players have heard, and they must never forget. When days turn cold, and stars twinkle clear in brisk December nights, flute players gather round their hearths to tell and retell the legend of that Flute Player pouring forth his melancholy strains in Bethlehem, two thousand years before.

*(Flute stops.)* His was a meager living—such as flute playing earns, but this night his hopes were high. Bethlehem was crowded—a good chance, he thought, for earning extra money to bridge his lean periods.

Huddled in the streets, he waited. Late into the night, he peddled his trade. Then he saw them—a tired, lonely couple making their way toward him.

**Flute Player** (*approaching Mary and Joseph*): A coupl'a mite'll git ya a right lively little tune . . . lift your spirits . . . fergit yer cares . . . what ya say?

**Joseph:** Where might we find lodging?

**Flute Player:** Tune's guar'nteed ta give health ta yer weary bones and set yer feet a tappin'.

**Joseph** (*not seeming to hear the Flute Player*): Ah, Mary, look up ahead—an inn. It won't be long now.

*(Joseph and Mary continue to move on while the Flute Player follows, trying to sell them a song.)*

**Flute Player:** I say my song's good as a night's rest.

*(Joseph and Mary make no response but continue on to the Inn door. Joseph knocks on the door and as he does, the Inn scene is lighted up. The Flute Player drops into the background. There is noise, etc., in the Inn, and Joseph's first knock is not heard. He knocks a second time. The Innkeeper stops to listen and the people quiet down. Joseph knocks a third time. The Innkeeper goes to the door but does not open it. They go through the first verse of the musical dialogue. On the second verse, the Innkeeper opens the door. At the end, the door is very soundly closed, and Mary and Joseph turned away. The Flute Player has been listening to the whole thing, and now he approaches them again.)*

**Flute Player:** Aha—now ye'll bargin fer a little tune.

**Joseph:** Sir, my wife is with child. She must have lodging for the night.

**Flute Player:** Flute playin's my business. Don't know nuthin' 'bout lodgin's or birthin' babies.

**Joseph** (*desperately clutching the Flute Player's cloak*): Surely you must know of someplace . . . anyplace!

**Flute Player:** Well now, me—I can bed down most anyplace. Take 'at cave back there . . . a stable once, I reckon. If yer not pertic'ler 'bout the lodgin's, yer welcome to 't. Course, it's not really mine ta be offerin'. I jist sorter stay there. Reckon no one'll ever know was you to stay, too.

*(Joseph and Mary turn and go into the cave, thanking the Flute Player.)*



Usually on these pages there is a how-to article, an interview or personal profile, a report on a conference, or a Board of Christian Education program promotional. This time, as a change of pace and to celebrate the wonder of Christ's birth, we invite you to gather around the fireplace (or kerosene heater or radiator) with your family and friends and read the following children's Christmas play. Assign parts to all who read, and encourage everyone to be as creative and expressive as possible in bringing the story to life. Even the smallest children can participate, perhaps by being a sheep or some other prop.

Then file away this issue for future use. Next year, when you need an idea for the annual children's Christmas program, consider producing "The Legend of the Flute Player" in your congregation.



# Flute Player

**Narrator:** His lodgings—a neglected stable . . . shelter for vagabonds—that's what he offered the unfortunate pair. But what did he care. His business was in the street. The night wore on. He slumped down exhausted, and there he was when a bunch of excited shepherds rushed into town.

**1st Shepherd:** Bethlehem, the city of David. There must be a hundred of babies here.

**2nd Shepherd:** A hundred mangers, too! How will we ever find the Holy Child?

**3rd Shepherd:** A hundred mangers and a hundred babies, but I'll wager only one manger with a baby in it.

**1st Shepherd:** That's the wonder of it. A manger.

**4th Shepherd:** Here comes someone. Maybe he knows. (*A ragged man approaches.*)

**2nd Shepherd:** Please, sir, could you tell us where we might find a manger where lies a heavenly Babe?

**Ragged Man:** A heavenly Babe in a manger? I wander the streets cold and hungry—not even enough money to pay for lodgin' in a stable—and you mock me with riddles of a heavenly Babe. Huh! Heaven doesn't come down to the likes of me!

**3rd Shepherd:** That's just it. Heaven did come down. The angels told us—the Messiah has come.

**Ragged Man:** Angels? Messiah? You're worse off than I am. At least, I've got my head—that I have! (*The ragged man leaves and a woman of class approaches.*)

**5th Shepherd:** Ma'am, do you know anything of a Prince that was born tonight?

**4th Shepherd:** He's wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger somewhere here in Bethlehem.

**Rich Woman:** What?! (*Pulling her skirts around her.*) Why, you're nothing but a bunch of common shepherds! How dare you address me?! I should pay the soldiers to run you from the streets! (*She turns to leave.*) A prince in a manger? Ha! That will be the day!

(*A priest of Israel approaches.*)

**5th Shepherd:** Here comes a priest of Israel. Surely he will know something.

**2nd Shepherd:** Sir, can you tell us where we might find the Savior of the world?

**1st Shepherd:** He is to be found in a manger somewhere in this city.

**Priest:** Are you trying to make a fool of me? Of course a Messiah will come. Scripture tells us that. But the time is not ripe. When the time is ripe, the priests will be the first to know. What do shepherds know of Saviors and Messiahs? Get back to your sheep-watching and star-gazing and leave matters of religion to those trained for such things. (*The priest leaves proudly.*)

**4th Shepherd:** No one seems to know anything. Maybe it was only a dream, or one of those fanciful stories we sometimes spin at night.

**5th Shepherd:** But we all saw the light! We all heard the angel!

**3rd Shepherd:** And didn't our hearts burn within us at the message? The Savior, who is Christ the Lord, is here, and we will find Him.

(*The Flute Player has been listening, and now he comes over to the shepherds.*)

**Flute Player:** Don't know what's frettin' ye folks, but whatever 'tis, I've a song ter drive it away. Our minds play fanciful tricks by times. Fanciful dreams fill the lonely days in the hills. The old flute player knows fer sure. But one song on my flute'll cure ya. A mite will get ye a rightly lively tune. What 'ya say?

**2nd Shepherd:** Sir, did you see anyone . . .

**Flute Player** (*continuing to bargain*): A mite for two songs? Three?

**1st Shepherd:** Do you know of any stable in Bethlehem where a baby may be?

**Flute Player:** Flute playin's ma business—don't know nuthin' 'bout babies or . . . Say now—there was a strange couple here just afore ya come. Wanted a place ter sleep. Said his wife is with child . . . yeh—that's what he say.

**5th Shepherd:** And where are they now?

**Flute Player:** Showed 'em ma stable. Course 't really weren't my stable. I just sorta use it. Said if they wasn't pertic'ler 'bout sleepin' on hay, they was welcome to 't.

**Shepherds** (*together*): Where?

**Flute Player** (*pointing a thumb toward the cave*): Right back yonder. Sort'er a cave like. Nice warm li'l place. Hardly no one even knows 'bout it.

(*Shepherds take off for the cave.*)

**Flute Player** (*calling after them*): They wasn't no special kind 'a folk, though.

(*The shepherds go quickly to the cave, and as they do, the backdrop with the cave scene on it moves away and the manger scene is engulfed in a warm bright light. The shepherds fall down to worship as the flute player watches in wonder. As the shepherds go to the manger and kneel, the piano and violins start playing softly, "What Child is This?", playing completely through. Then the five shepherds sing the song—first verse and chorus—rising at the end and turning and walking toward the flute player as they repeat the chorus, "This, this is Christ the King . . ." on to the end of the chorus, then they walk out.*)

**Flute Player:** Sir, how could I know? Forgive me. (*He lifts his flute and plays a soft lullaby tune. Then he hands his flute to Mary.*) It's all I got—please take it. Nobody's wantin' my music tonight, but 'taint the flute's fault. It's a mighty fine li'l piece. (*He turns and faces the crowds.*)

**Narrator:** And so he gave his flute—his only means of living—but he hadn't considered that. He couldn't have kept it. As the first rays of dawn streaked the sky, the town began to stir. Once again he went into the streets. This time, he peddled a different tune.

next page, please



# THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE

## Indonesia Christians fear official suppression

JAKARTA, Indonesia (WEIS)—Christians and churches of this nation are concerned with restrictions which have been placed on their freedom of expression. The concern arose over a judicial decision earlier this year by the country's attorney-general. The edict specifically banned distribution of 19 Christian books.

The books are by Indonesian Christian writer Hamran Ambrie, a former Muslim school teacher and preacher who became a Christian in 1962. His writings had been in response to publications which sought to distort, discredit, and attack Christianity.

Christians point out that there are more than 260 books by Muslim writers which assail the Christian message. No restrictions have been placed on their circulation.

The issue has aroused the entire Christian community of 15 million people in a concerted expression of concern and an appeal for withdrawal of the legislation. They contend that freedom is fundamental in Indonesian society and that it is threatened by the recent action.

Indonesian Christians stress that they desire cordial and respectful relations with

Muslims and all others. They have appealed for prayer from the Christian community around the world.

## "Pac Man" becomes tool in new arcade ministry

KANSAS CITY (EP)—When Ellen Riffe walks up to a "Pac Man" machine and drops in a quarter she has winning on her mind—winning people to Jesus. Wearing jeans, a "Pac Man" T-shirt and an "arcade chaplain" button, the Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary student frequents several arcades in the Kansas City area befriending, counseling and witnessing to customers.

Her ministry began about six months ago as a research project when Riffe began studying the feasibility of such a ministry. Three months and 50 arcades later she determined an arcade ministry was possible, ethically sound and greatly needed.

Nicknamed "The Arcade Queen" by friends from seminary, the energetic chaplain established a routine during the summer where she would visit arcades, play video games and make friends with managers and customers alike.

Recalling her initial witnessing opportunities in the arcades, Riffe remarked, "I was

kind of scared . . . I was real scared . . . I was terrified." Now, however, she feels comfortable with her role and confidently eases into conversations about Christ and salvation as she fires away on a video game.

As the arcade ministry continued to grow Riffe realized the need for local church involvement in order to further expand the ministry and provide follow-up and discipleship for new Christians. A great deal of her time now is being spent in Kansas City area churches, presenting the need for sponsors and participants in the program and training people interested in beginning an arcade ministry through their own church.

## Study questions effectiveness in evangelizing unchurched

CALGARY, Canada (WEIS)—North American evangelical church growth is due primarily to "the procreation and circulation of the saints," according to two Canadian sociologists who conducted a five-year study of the backgrounds of all new members received by sixteen of this city's churches.

The two professors, Reginald W. Bibby of the University of Lethbridge and Merlin B. Brinkerhoff of the University of Calgary, presented their findings in a paper at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, held in October in Rhode Island.

## The Flute Player . . .

from page 15

*(People begin moving across the stage. In his excitement, the Flute Player tries to convince them that the babe in the manger is the Christ Child—the Messiah. Some completely ignore him; others are curious enough to go to the manger but turn away, shaking their heads. No one really "sees." Among the group is the small, lame shepherd boy who looks, then moves away. As the stage clears, the Flute Player returns to Mary, dejected.)*

**Flute Player:** They won't listen. They don't see.

**Mary:** There are none so blind as they who will not see. *(She holds the flute out to the Flute Player.)* Your gift has been blessed and multiplied. Never forget it belongs to the Christ Child, but you must play it for Him. Hearts that seek truth will hear and come to the manger. *(The Flute Player hesitates.)* Go ahead, play it.

*(The Flute Player picks up the flute and starts to play "Oh, Come Little Children." He walks across the stage and then halfway down the center aisle. Children gather around him from every direction and follow him. He turns and leads them to the manger. They sing along. As they are finishing the song, a little lame Shepherd Boy hurries down the aisle, carrying a little lamb. Making his way through the crowd, he goes to the manger and talks to the Christ Child.)*

**Shepherd Boy:** I heard your song. I came quick as I could. Would you like my pet lamb? He's still awfully little . . . sometimes runs away. You gotta watch him real close.

*(Mary moves over to take the lamb. The little boy backs away a bit, keeping his eye on the lamb.)* Keep him warm. At night he sleeps with me and he likes his milk warm and

**Mary:** Thank you, little boy. Does your lamb have a name?

**Boy:** Oh yes, I call him Snowball.

**Mary:** You must love him very much. *(Boy gives a bright smile and nods his head eagerly.)*

**Mary:** Would you take care of Snowball for the Christ Child? *(The boy looks at Mary questioningly.)* Snowball belongs to the Christ Child—never forget. But you must take care of him. Each spring when you clip his wool, make a coat to keep some poor child warm. Will you do that for the Christ Child?

*(The boy nods eagerly and takes the lamb, turns to leave, and confronts the Flute Player. They exchange meaningful glances and it is obvious they have struck up a comradeship. The Flute Player lifts his flute and plays as they walk together down the center aisle.)*

**Narrator:** And so the flute player learned the mystery of giving to the Christ Child. A gift that is blessed, multiplied, and returned—yet always belonging to the Christ. *(Pause)* You, too, are a flute player of sorts. What is your flute? Each of us has something we can and must give. What will you give the Christ?

*Millie Imboden, with her husband and three children, attends the Grantham (Pa.) congregation. She has written a number of plays and has helped to direct congregational children's Christmas programs.*



The study, conducted from 1975 to 1980, delved into the upbringing and background of each new member added to the rolls of the 16 participating evangelical churches. In that period, seventy percent of the additions were transfers of membership of people who were Christians, and 17 percent were from immediate families of the church's members.

Only thirteen percent of the new members could be designated "unchurched." Most of those had been reached through the witness of relatives or friends.

Evangelical church growth was largely due, according to the researchers, to "better member and offspring retention."

The study seemed to indicate a basic reluctance on the part of churches to engage in determined evangelistic outreach to the unchurched and secularized around them. Since 1970, five of the congregations moved from neighborhood areas to sites that had minimal neighborhood identification but were located near major traffic arteries. Relocation—not evangelization of the unchurched—appeared to be the preferred strategy of stagnant or declining churches, the study would suggest.

Bibby and Brinkerhoff maintain that their findings are true for most churches in any industrialized country. They recognize that they can run counter to major assumptions of church leaders who have contended that evangelical church growth demonstrated success in reaching secularized, unchurched people.

"There is minimal penetration of the host, secular society," they state.

#### And finally . . .

ANAHEIM, Calif. (EP)—The man who successfully posed as everything from a monk to a wartime surgeon is dead from a heart attack at the age of 60.

Ferdinand DeMara's life was the basis of the 1960 "The Great Imposter" movie starring Tony Curtis.

The 350-pound DeMara's assumed identities included a Trappist monk, a doctor of psychology, a surgeon, a dean of the philosophy school at a small college, a law student, a career researcher, a junior college teacher in Maine, an assistant warden at a Texas prison, a zoology school graduate student and other.

His exploits at various points led to several serious criminal charges. He never spent a day in jail, however. After each pose was unveiled, DeMara would lay low for a while and then assume another identity and profession.

Since 1959, however, he stuck to his own identity. "He was the most miserable, unhappy man I have known," said Dr. John J. Zane, his physician. "Over the past few weeks, all he said was . . . he wished he could die and go to heaven."

DeMara spent his final years working as an ordained Baptist minister and then as a visiting hospital chaplain.

## EDITORIAL

### If you know me, you know my Father

*What to write as a Christmas editorial? I considered, and rejected, several options until it was the night before deadline, and all through the office, not a creature was stirring, for it was after eleven . . .*

It was the third visit his parents had made in three years, traveling from a nearby state to spend time with their children and grandchildren. During those earlier trips, they had been introduced in the local congregation. But the new pastor didn't know that when he met them in the narthex prior to the Wednesday night Bible study.

After the opening hymns, the pastor mentioned there were guests present, and invited the son to say a few words of introduction. Taken by surprise—and struck by an impulse to try a bit of humor—he stood and simply said, "If you know me, you know my parents." As he sat down, there were some smiles and a few chuckles in the assembly.

While not a typical introduction, there is some truth in the idea that "If you know me, you know my parents." Having passed that mystical milestone known as the "fortieth birthday," I am becoming increasingly aware of the similarities between myself and my parents (and even between my children and me). I can see where I inherited many of my attitudes, values, abilities, even hobbies and preferences in food. (And I am aware of the likelihood of passing them on to the next generation.) Even so, I know of many families in which family resemblances are much more pronounced than in my family.

"If you know me, you know my parents." That whimsical introduction had a certain biblical ring. Checking it out as a possible editorial idea, I found the reference in John 14:9. Philip had asked Jesus to reveal God to the disciples. Jesus replied, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."

The author of the book of Hebrews used some theological terms to say essentially the same thing. "In the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son . . . the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being" (Heb. 1:1-3, NIV).

Here is the central focus of Christmas. This baby, sleeping on the hay in the stable (didn't he ever cry?), this young carpenter in Joseph's shop in Nazareth, this teacher and healer who walked the dusty roads of Palestine—this is God, the Lord of the universe, who in the Incarnation entered into the human experience. What a mystery! What a miracle! What a message!

As we enjoy Christmas festivities with family and friends, let us keep central in our thoughts the name given to that child—Immanuel, "God with us." Especially as we come in contact with persons who have not yet accepted Christ as Lord, let us share with others that name and its meaning. For the Lord truly has come! Let earth receive her King. Let us pray that every heart will prepare Him room, while heaven and nature sings.

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"If you know me, you know my parents." One more thought to ponder. In Romans 8, Paul wrote about believers being "conformed" to the likeness of Jesus Christ. In your actions, attitudes and system of values, how much do you resemble Christ the Lord? Is it likely that anyone watching or listening to you would notice a family likeness to Jesus? (That's one of the reasons the Holy Spirit has been given to the believer.) Just thought I'd ask. G





# Reflections of a “retired” missionary

by Lewis B. Sider

At this point in life I take time out for stocktaking. What have I accomplished? Where am I now? What is my future? The path that I have walked throughout life has not been without problems. I cannot lay claim to one continuous life of victory with no defeats nor one blaze of glory with no dark valleys. I have seen both.

I have been a career missionary, an ordinary lay person and an active participant in the ongoing work of the church. I have engaged in secular employment when my wife and I needed to provide a home for our family and in order to build a certain amount of retirement security. I have known the pain of rejection and of being left out of the mainstream of life when good remunerative employment was hard to find. A missionary colleague once said to me that being a missionary doesn't prepare one for work at home. And I have found that to be true.

But God has been faithful and has blessed us above what we could ask or think. When we remember the '60s when we had nothing but our meager earnings between us and a desperate situation and then realize how the Lord brought us out of all this, we marvel. We marvel that we were finally able to pay for a

home and then were able to turn this, together with some additional savings, to purchase a lease contract on a cottage at Messiah Village. This is beyond our fondest dreams during those lean years.

Spiritually, my life has also been one of struggle. While I became a Christian early in life and committed my life to the service of Christ and the church, life has not been a bed of roses. There have been victories but also dark valleys. Through it all I have been made to realize that nothing good that I have done has had any value in purchasing my salvation. I trust alone in the merits of the blood of Christ for cleansing from all sin and uncleanness.

I have sometimes been tempted to feel that I've made too many mistakes and failures and have not been worthy to be called God's child. But then I am reminded to bring all my failures and mistakes, all the things I have done—whether big or little, meaningful or not—and lay them at Jesus' feet, saying, “Here I am,

***In fact, I  
don't feel like  
a retired person  
at all.***

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*Lewis served with Brethren in Christ Missions in Saskatchewan, Zimbabwe and Zambia for nearly twenty years and presently works part-time in the Mount Joy Missions Center.*

Lord. Take all there is of me; I am yours. Take me and use me for your glory.”

At present we are living in so-called retirement at Messiah Village. We thank the Lord for his provision for our needs. But we still maintain the old urge to serve. I have found satisfaction and a real measure of fulfillment in service as a tax resource person and tax preparer of the Brethren in Christ Missions office. Although this job is not without stress, it has brought to me a sense of commitment to the Lord that I cherish. Together with service being given at Messiah Village, this has helped to keep me busy and productive in retirement. In fact, I do not feel like a retired person at all.

In addition, the Lord has blessed us financially. Not only is our income adequate, but the frugality learned during those lean years has remained with us, and this has enabled us to give generously, not only through our local congregation but also to the work so dear to our hearts, the mission enterprise itself. Throughout life we have practiced tithing (which for us means a tenth of gross income) and more recently have felt God's leading to go far beyond the tithe in giving to the Lord's work.

These things are largely what keep us going, giving us a present fulfillment and hope for the future as we continue to serve the Lord and the church with all our hearts. I firmly believe that continuing to be active is largely responsible for our good health, our healthy outlook on life, and our hope for the future.

I hope that this testimony may be of value in inspiring others to trust the Lord for all their needs and to give liberally to the ministries of the church. Missions should not have to retrench because God's people fail to give. Let us be faithful in our testimony, our daily lives and our use and appropriation of the resources God has given us. If we obey the Lord in this respect, he will not leave us destitute, comfortless or abandoned. Freely we have received; freely let us give. ■

*Evangelical Visitor*